

The Researching Process



Important goals of research

New knowledge

Examples→

- a. The biochemical triggers of alcohol to argue for more research into addiction
- b. Learning about shopping habits in urban, suburban, and rural communities to argue about the downfall of suburban America
- c. Comparing unemployment between Bush's and Obama's presidencies to argue that U.S. citizens are better off today

New understanding

Examples→

- a. Better methods for preventing and treating alcoholism
- b. Creating a solution to the disappearance of small towns
- c. Learn about statistics under different presidencies and how employment rates determine economic growth

What is NOT research

- A paper that merely strings together quotations from sources
- An essay drawn entirely from personal experiences and thoughts
- A theoretical paper written in generalities and without any specifics from sources
- A paper in which information drawn from sources is not properly documented

Stages in the Research Process

Stage 1: Select and limit

Select and limit a topic consistent with assignment guidelines. Review some sources as necessary to aid topic selection. Consider audience, purpose, and required length of paper.

Stage 2: Focus and plan

Choose an approach or focus for your research. Decide on a tentative thesis, hypothesis, or question to answer. Think, talk, and read to complete this stage. Write a research proposal when you have formulated a working thesis and a rough plan of how you will conduct research.

Stages in the Research Process

Stage 3: Gather sources

In a systematic manner, locate potential sources from the library and other appropriate places (send emails to officials on topic, ask potential interviewees for interview, plan a way to conduct a survey or poll on the subject)

Stage 4: Read and think

Read and evaluate sources. Take notes on relevant information and ideas. Learn about the topic. Rethink what needs to be covered in your study. Re-search as necessary. Make a preliminary outline. Think more.

Stages in the Research Process

Stage 5: Organize and draft

Plan in detail the structure of your paper. With notes arranged accordingly, write a first draft. Include documentation as you draft.

Stage 6: Revise, edit, and format correctly

First revise your rough draft and then edit to remove errors. Prepare the completed paper in an appropriate format with correct documentation of sources.

When choosing a topic, make sure it—

- Interests you
- Isn't too broad
- Can't be fully researched with only one source
- Isn't a biographical study
- Doesn't produce a wildly emotional response from you
- Isn't overly technical (i.e., if you don't know or want to know the complexity of federal tax codes, then arguing for a reduction in the capital gains tax might be a bad idea)

Once you have chosen your topic, you will need to work on stage 2: *Focus and plan*.

- FIRST, you will need to start working on your **Research Proposal**.
- If you told me that your research essay's subject would be on computers, I would ask you, What about computers?
- You might answer, I want to write about the impact of computers on the 20th century (your subject's topic).
- Next, I might ask you, well, what do you think about the impact of computers on the 20th century? You might answer with your thesis statement: Computers have had the greatest impact of any technological development in the 20th century.

An Example of the Start of a Research Proposal

I propose to show that computers have had the greatest impact of any technological development in the 20th century. I will show the influence of computers at work, in daily living, and in play to emphasize the breadth of influence. I will argue that other possibilities (such as cars) have not had the same impact as computers. I will check the library's book catalog and databases for sources on technological developments and on computers specifically. I will also interview a family friend who works with computers at the Pentagon.

Locating Sources

To work effectively in the searching process of research, you will need to know:

1. Your search strategy—how and what to find to develop your topic
2. Your choice of method and format for preparing a working bibliography
3. Your library and the internet—what is available, what is appropriate and credible, and what could be used in your paper.

To keep track of your sources, have an organization in place. You could either use the reliable 3 X 5 index cards or you could use files on your computer, organizing them by sections in your paper. If you know how you will outline your paper's material, then you should be able to create files with names like "Background paragraph" or "First reason for stem cell research."

And the most important thing to remember while researching...

SSC librarians are always available to help you as your journey into researching unfolds.

To contact a SSC librarian, either stop by the campus library, call the librarian, or online chat with a librarian; you can do all of these things by checking going to the SSC Library website and you will see the phone number and the “Library Chat” option on the top right of the homepage. Just go to the SSC Library homepage here:

<http://www.southseattle.edu/library>

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